

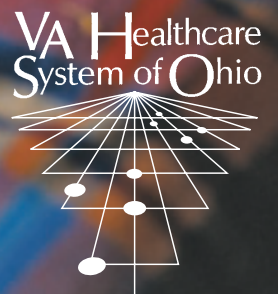
Veterans' Health

FALL • 2004

THE WELLNESS MAGAZINE
FOR OHIO VETERANS

Veterans
share about
their care

Don't let
depression
keep you down





To our readers

Welcome to our fall issue of *Veterans' Health*. In this issue, we're pleased to tell you about the many ways we're working to better your well-being. Being an effective healthcare provider means knowing what our patients need from us.

On pages 4–5, learn how sharing your feedback helps ensure you receive the best possible care. On pages 6–7, get the facts on recognizing depression—a serious condition that affects millions of older Americans—and find out how to take advantage of special treatment programs and support groups.

Remember to get your flu shot, and enjoy the new season in good health!

—Clyde Parkis, Network Director



About our mailing list

We make every effort to ensure our mailing lists are accurate.

If you have questions or would like to be added to or deleted from the list, let us know. Please include your entire address. To make a change, you *must* mail the mailing panel to:

Veterans' Health

VA Healthcare System of Ohio
Network Office

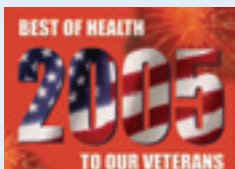
11500 Northlake Drive, Suite 200
Cincinnati, OH 45249

Veterans' Health is back online at www.va.gov/visn10/. Visit this site to view back issues or subscribe.

Get your flu shot

It's that time of year again. Time for the leaves to turn gold and red, and time to get your flu vaccine! If you're age 65 or older or have a long-term health problem, you should get a flu shot, as should healthcare workers, police officers and firefighters.

Getting a flu shot in October or November is the best way to stay healthy through the winter months. Contact your VA healthcare provider to schedule your shot. Receive a free 2005 veterans' health calendar when you come in. **VH**



Recognizing Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. This is the month women are reminded to be proactive in preventing the disease that strikes one in eight women.

Early detection by mammograms is the best way to increase survival rates. The American Cancer Society recommends yearly mammograms for women over 40. For more information on preventing breast cancer, contact your VA healthcare provider. **VH**

Your voice

"Thanks so much. I enjoy your publication and look forward to every issue. Keep up the great work!"

—Eugene Valentine,
Canton VAMC

"Rustum A. Shahzad is a fine physician. He explains symptoms in a proper way, and I'm very satisfied with my treatments. Keep up the good work, and thanks for taking the time to diagnose my conditions."

—Isaac J. Lightle,
Chillicothe VAMC



Veterans' Health is published quarterly as a patient education service by VA Healthcare System of Ohio, one of the 21 integrated networks of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The publication is intended to provide information to help you stay well, manage your healthcare and learn about the many health services available through VA. This publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, which should be obtained from your doctor. All articles may be reproduced for educational purposes.

The Mission of VA Healthcare System of Ohio is:

- To provide veterans a continuum of care that is accessible, value-added and cost-effective, and of the highest quality, within an environment of outstanding education and research.
- To promote a culture that supports and develops a caring, compassionate, competent and quality-oriented workforce.

Veterans' Health Editorial Directors

Suzanne Tate
VA Healthcare System of Ohio

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Chillicothe VAMC

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Putting CARES plans into action

The Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) plan to study and improve the VA healthcare system nationwide is well underway. In fact, VA Healthcare System of Ohio has already started taking steps to bring better care to patients. Two improvements patients can look forward to: a new outpatient clinic in Columbus and improved services in one area of Cleveland. Phase 1 of both projects will begin this fall.

Bigger is better

The new outpatient clinic in Columbus, which will replace the current Chalmers P. Wylie VA Outpatient Clinic using the same name, will be much larger than the current clinic site. "This 295,000-square-foot clinic will help us expand our services," says Patrick Hull, network planner of VA Healthcare System of Ohio.

The clinic will offer a surgery center. Many patients will benefit by no longer needing to travel to Cincinnati for outpatient surgery. The clinic also will provide dental, ambulatory care, cardiology, radiology and audiology services. In addition to their primary care, patients will be able to receive electrocardiograms of their hearts and laboratory tests.

The new Chalmers P. Wylie VA Outpatient



Clinic will open in late 2007 on 21.8 acres of the Defense Supply Center.

All in one

More good news for patients is that Brecksville VAMC will combine with Wade Park VAMC so patients can enjoy more efficient services at one convenient site. The expanded Wade Park VAMC will open in late 2007. Brecksville VAMC will close by early 2008. The new site at the Wade Park location will be just 26 miles from the current site and will offer patients a new 120-bed domiciliary plus a parking garage with 1,200 spaces.

Patients will benefit from the money saved to run one clinic. This will mean less spending on facility maintenance and more money to spend on doctors and resources that patients need. "Consolidating services at one location will save \$23 million. That excess money will be used for patient care services," says Hull. "These initiatives are about investing in veterans' healthcare in the most efficient ways." **VH**



**We proudly recognize
our turn to serve!**

Welcoming our newest vets

At VA Healthcare System of Ohio, we appreciate the brave men and women who have risked their lives to fight terrorism at home and abroad. To ensure our recently discharged veterans make smooth transitions from the military healthcare system into VA, we have designated points of contact at our five primary sites of care:

Annette Damico
Chillicothe VAMC
740-772-7020

Mark Wallace
Cleveland VAMC
440-526-3030, ext. 7500

Marlene Davis-Pierce, R.N.
Dayton VAMC
937-267-7591

Robert McLaughlin
Cincinnati VAMC
513-475-6539

Donna Chirwa
Columbus OPC
614-257-5636

Veterans share about their care

**Patient feedback
leads to healthcare
improvements**



At VA Healthcare System of Ohio, we want to provide you the best healthcare possible. However, to do this, we need to work with you.

To keep improving services, every three months the VA Office of Quality Performance mails the Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients (SHEP) to random veteran patients who've received inpatient or outpatient care in Ohio and across the nation. By completing this confidential survey, you can let us know how satisfied you are with our healthcare services—and which areas you'd like to see improved.

"The survey gives us a clear picture of what patients want and need," says Lori Hice, customer

service coordinator for Chillicothe VAMC. "The more responses we get, the clearer the picture." Seventy-two percent of outpatients, about 50 percent of inpatients and 30 percent of mental health inpatients completed the most recent survey. "The survey takes about 30 minutes to fill out," says Hice. "It's worth the time. It benefits you and other patients who use VA healthcare facilities." Patients receive a postage-paid envelope to return the survey.

The survey responses reach VA Healthcare System of Ohio through the VA Office of Quality Performance, which gathers the SHEP results and then sends them to all VA medical centers each quarter.

The survey says ...

"The survey results are like a report card for us," says Hice. "We compare the scores we get to national standards. We want to exceed the national average score for all medical facilities nationwide."

The survey also helps us educate patients. Through one survey question, we learned many patients don't realize that one team of providers always has primary responsibility for their care, even when they receive some services at different clinics. The question asks, "Is one provider or team in charge of your care?" Hice says, "We want all patients to understand that one VA medical team tracks their care. When you receive treatment at more than one site or clinic, you're still connected to a single responsible VA healthcare team. This team stays with you every step of the way."

We're listening

Since launching SHEP in 1995, VA Healthcare System of Ohio has made several improvements. After 70 percent of surveyed outpatients said they needed better communication with their healthcare providers, the Patient Education Council and the Patient Stakeholders Council of VA Healthcare System of Ohio worked together to solve the problem. Their response: the "Be Informed—Ask Questions" flyer. Patients receive this flyer before every healthcare appointment, either in the mail or at the clinic upon check-in. "The flyer lists several questions that patients may need to address with their healthcare providers," explains Hice. "It supports better patient education and communication." (See this newsletter's insert for a list of "Be Informed" questions.)

New programs have resulted from patient feedback. After many patients said they experienced long waits for appointments with primary care providers and specialists, VA developed the **Advanced Clinic Access** initiative. "To help reduce wait times and delays, VA Healthcare System of Ohio opened about 24 community-based outpatient clinics to provide alternate sites for primary care and mental

health treatment," says Tina Cole, M.S., chief of ambulatory care and processing at Cincinnati VAMC. "In addition, we've taught patients the importance of letting their VA healthcare providers know when they can't make their appointments. The no-show rate has decreased from 27 percent to 13 percent, helping other patients be seen more quickly."

In October 2003, VA Healthcare System of Ohio began giving patients complementary *Healthwise® for Life* books at their first primary care appointments. Some clinics are now distributing the books during new patient orientation sessions. The 350-page book covers more than 200 common health problems and helps patients recognize when it's time to see their healthcare providers. "It's a resource to help you make smart choices about your health," says Cole.

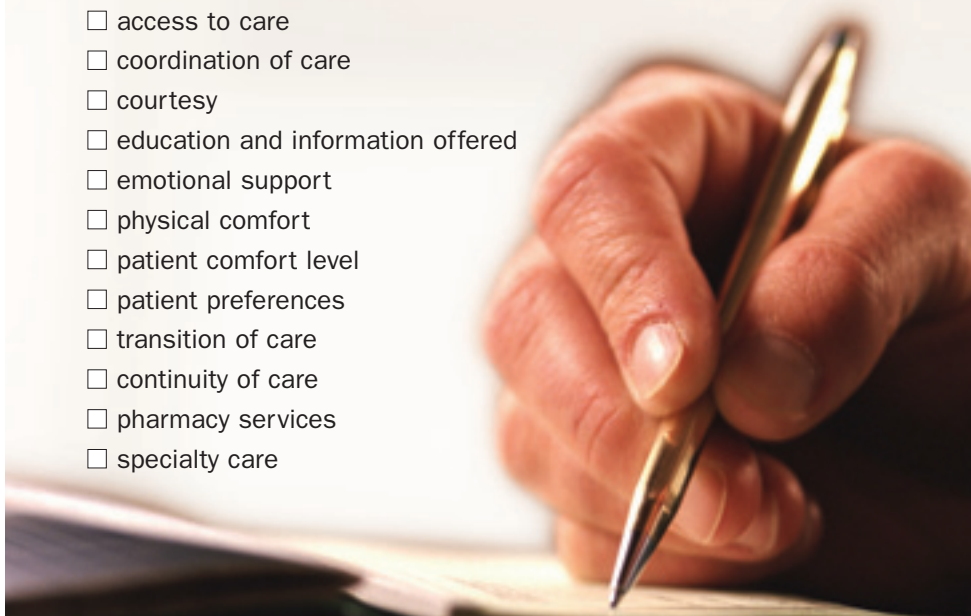
VA Healthcare System of Ohio is pleased with the improvements it's made so far with help from SHEP. "We encourage patient feedback," says Cole. "It helps us make decisions about your healthcare together." **VH**

If you haven't received a copy of SHEP but would like to offer your feedback, take a moment to fill out a Quik Card, located in hanging boxes at clinic areas. We want to hear from you!

SHEP at a glance

The SHEP survey includes 103 questions that cover these 12 dimensions of care:

- ☐ access to care
- ☐ coordination of care
- ☐ courtesy
- ☐ education and information offered
- ☐ emotional support
- ☐ physical comfort
- ☐ patient comfort level
- ☐ patient preferences
- ☐ transition of care
- ☐ continuity of care
- ☐ pharmacy services
- ☐ specialty care



Don't let depression keep you down



For more information on depression or to make an appointment with a VA healthcare provider, see this issue's back page for the number of your nearest VA medical facility.

Feeling blue every now and then is a natural part of life. People often feel sad or depressed when they go through major changes, like the death of a loved one or a job loss, or when they have to face the holidays. For about 18 million Americans, however, depression is a clinical mood disorder that requires medical attention. Veterans are among them. To help veterans with this need, VA Healthcare System of Ohio's main medical facilities in Cincinnati, Chillicothe, Cleveland, Columbus and Dayton offer comprehensive mental health and substance abuse programs.

"About half of the veterans at Brecksville VAMC suffer some form of depression," says Ruth Ann Smith, a certified psychiatric nurse practitioner at Brecksville VAMC. "Often, it's caused by a situation,

such as homelessness, and can be relieved by dealing with that problem. Sometimes, the depression is more severe and is caused by a clinical illness."

You may be suffering depression if you feel sad or unhappy for more than two weeks, have little energy, are unable to concentrate or have lost interest in your usual activities. Other signs of depression include changes in eating or sleeping habits and, in some cases, thoughts of suicide.

Risk factors

You're at greater risk for depression if you:

- have a family history of mental illness
- have a family history of substance abuse
- have suffered a devastating experience, such as

an unforgettable combat experience or a spouse's death

- are elderly
- are male
- live alone

About 7 million Americans ages 65 and older suffer some level of chronic depression. "When depression lingers for more than two weeks, you should get to a safe, supportive place for professional care. VA Healthcare System of Ohio is that kind of place," says Robert Anthenelli, M.D., director of the Substance Dependence Program at Cincinnati VAMC. "We offer inpatient and outpatient programs to help our veterans cope with all types of depression."

Alcoholism and depression

If you come to VA Healthcare System of Ohio for help, you'll receive physical and psychiatric evaluations as well as screenings for depression and substance use. "Frequently, alcohol and drug use go hand in hand with depression," says Dr. Anthenelli. "It's important to find out whether a patient's depression is caused by alcohol or drugs, or if depression is what drove that person to abuse alcohol or drugs."

According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, about 18 million Americans abuse alcohol. If substance abuse is causing depression, treating that dependency can often relieve the condition. VA Healthcare System of Ohio provides substance abuse programs, including counseling and support groups.

If stopping drug and alcohol use for three to four weeks with help from a substance abuse program doesn't relieve depression, the next step is to check for a clinical mental illness. "Mental health disorders are complex, but when alcohol or drug use is involved, we have to peel through even more layers to reach an accurate diagnosis and treatment plan," says Dr. Anthenelli.

That's why VA Healthcare System of Ohio takes a holistic approach to

care. "We provide a team of psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical nurse specialists, social workers, counselors, therapists, nurses and others who work together to diagnose and treat depression and substance abuse," explains Dr. Anthenelli.

In addition to treating depression with medication, VA Healthcare System of Ohio offers a variety of support groups and therapies to help patients. These include psychotherapy, occupational and recreational therapy as well as relapse prevention techniques.

"Whatever the root of the depression is, it needs to be managed," says Dr. Anthenelli. "Depression and substance abuse are common illnesses that we can treat." **VH**



A promise for better mental health

Because many veterans struggle with mental health issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, VA Healthcare System of Ohio makes mental healthcare a priority. With the help of VA Healthcare System of Ohio staff members, VA created a national Mental Health Steering Committee to improve mental health services. Its goals are spelled out in its Mental Health Action Agenda, "Achieving the Promise—Transforming Mental Health Care in VA."

The agenda responds to the yearlong study of America's mental health system by the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. The study put forth the following goals for transforming mental healthcare in America:

- help Americans better understand that mental health is essential to overall health
- provide patient- and family-focused mental healthcare
- make sure mental health services are equal across the country
- encourage early mental health screenings, assessments and referrals
- offer excellent mental healthcare and advanced research
- make technology accessible for mental healthcare information

VA Healthcare System of Ohio is ahead of the game, offering well-rounded mental health services in all of its community-based outpatient clinics. It's also exploring ways to use technology to give veterans better access to mental health information. **VH**

Reaching us is easy

Keep this information handy—when you need us, we'll be there.

Chillicothe VAMC

17273 State Route 104
Chillicothe, OH 45601
740-773-1141

Community-Based Outpatient Clinics Athens

510 West Union Street
Athens, OH 45701
740-593-7314

Lancaster

1550 Sheridan Drive,
Suite 100
Colonnade Medical Building
Lancaster, OH 43130
740-653-6145

Marietta

418 Colegate Drive
Marietta, OH 45750
740-568-0412

Portsmouth

621 Broadway Street
Portsmouth, OH 45662
740-353-3236

Cincinnati VAMC

3200 Vine Street
Cincinnati, OH 45220
513-861-3100

Ft. Thomas VA Campus

1000 So. Ft. Thomas Avenue
Ft. Thomas, KY 41075
859-572-6202

Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

Bellevue

103 Landmark Drive
Bellevue, KY 41073
859-392-3840

Clermont County

Eastgate Professional
Office Park
4355 Ferguson Drive,
Suite 270
Cincinnati, OH 45245
513-943-3680

Dearborn County

710 W. Eads Parkway
Lawrenceburg, IN 47025
812-539-2313

Louis Stokes Wade Park VAMC

10701 East Boulevard
Cleveland, OH 44106
216-791-3800

Brecksville VA Medical Center

10000 Brecksville Road
Brecksville, OH 44141
440-526-3030

Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

Akron

55 West Waterloo
Akron, OH 44319
330-724-7715

Canton

733 Market Avenue South
Canton, OH 44702
330-489-4600

East Liverpool

332 West 6th Street
East Liverpool, OH 43920
330-386-4303

Lorain

205 West 20th Street
Lorain, OH 44052
440-244-3833

Mansfield

1456 Park Avenue West
Mansfield, OH 44906
419-529-4602

McCafferty

4242 Lorain Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44113
216-939-0699

New Philadelphia

1260 Monroe Avenue, #15H
New Philadelphia, OH 44663
330-602-5339

Painesville

7 West Jackson Street
Painesville, OH 44077
440-357-6740

Ravenna

6751 North Chestnut Street,
Suite 11A
Ravenna, OH 44266
330-296-3642

Sandusky

3416 Columbus Avenue
Sandusky, OH 44870
419-625-7350

Warren

Riverside Square
1400 Tod Avenue NW
Warren, OH 44485
330-392-0311

Youngstown

2031 Belmont Avenue
Youngstown, OH 44505
330-740-9200

Chalmers P. Wylie Outpatient Clinic

543 Taylor Avenue
Columbus, OH 43203
614-257-5200

Community-Based Outpatient Clinics Grove City

1953 Ohio Avenue
Grove City, OH 43123
614-257-5800

Marion

1203 Delaware Avenue
Marion, OH 43302
740-223-8089

Zanesville

840 Bethesda Drive
Building 3A
Zanesville, OH 43701
740-453-7725

Dayton VAMC

4100 West Third Street
Dayton, OH 45428
937-268-6511

Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

Lima

1303 Bellefontaine Avenue
Lima, OH 45804
419-222-5788

Middletown

675 North University Boulevard
Middletown, OH 45042
513-423-8387

Richmond

4351 South A Street
Richmond, IN 47374
765-973-6915

Springfield

512 South Burnett Road
Springfield, OH 45505
937-328-3385

Call Tele-Nurse at 1-888-838-6446. • Visit us online at www.va.gov/visn10/.

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